

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today released the following statement regarding the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's recent public disclosure that trichloroethylene (TCE), a toxic chemical used for decades at IBM's Endicott manufacturing plant, has entered the Village of Endicott's drinking water aquifer through elevator shafts on the former IBM campus. The congressman has been instrumental in convincing state and federal agencies to address toxic contamination issues, from toxic remediation, to studies on public health and the health of former IBM workers, in Endicott. In 2004, he successfully petitioned the DEC to reclassify the site from Class 4 to Class 2 on the state's registry of inactive hazardous waste sites -- bringing much greater resources, attention, and urgency to the need to test and remediate Endicott's more than 300 acre toxic spill.

"Unfortunately, I am not at all surprised that the DEC has confirmed that these large pathways for TCE exist between the relatively shallow groundwater level -- which is found a few dozen feet beneath the surface -- and the federally designated sole source aquifer used by the village of Endicott for drinking water. I warned about the likelihood of this sort of danger to the aquifer six years ago in correspondence to the DEC commissioner and informed her that traces of chemical solvents had already been detected in village wells. This potentially dangerous situation was a critical part of my argument for getting the site reclassified from Class 4 to Class 2.

"For decades this toxic plume went underestimated and received only scant attention because IBM admitted to spilling just 4,100 gallons methyl chloroform. Today over 100,000 gallons of chemicals have been removed from the ground and we are only just now beginning to learn the ways in which TCE was used, mishandled, and released in manners that continue to threaten public health in Endicott.

"Preventing the enlargement of the toxic plume is of critical importance. It's clear to me that other buildings on the IBM campus and Endicott with deep elevator shafts, or any other deep underground structure that penetrates the aquifer, should immediately be examined and tested to determine whether they present an additional pathway for toxic chemicals to enter and degrade the aquifer.

"Of greater importance, however, is delineating the source of the TCE contamination, which is understood to be behind Building 18, and investing the resources necessary to remove the chemicals, once and for all, before they have a chance to enter the village's aquifer."

